



Rebuttals in San Jose

Posted by **Pierluigi Oliverio** on Monday, August 18, 2008

City Hall Diary

Rebuttals? No, not at the 2-minute public forum at council meetings but, rather, for ballot statements.

This past Tuesday, the council decided to match the State of California in allowing rebuttal statements so that voters could hear more than one side of a ballot issue. The State of California ballot statements carry a full debate on the particular state propositions. However, San Jose (prior to last week's vote) only allowed the options of arguments in favor of or against a measure, with no rebuttals. Mayor Reed drafted a memo that changed the "no rebuttal" rule, and that's a good thing.

Of course, nothing is free. There is an estimated \$30,000 fiscal impact in this new policy (for printing costs) for each rebuttal statement per citywide measure—a small price to pay for democracy. Whoever prints the ballots for the county must make a decent margin for one extra black-and-white printed page. This is on top of the \$250,000 the county charges the city to put a measure before the voters of San Jose.

When people or groups submit ballot statements they must be reviewed by the city attorney for accuracy and to ensure that nothing "disparaging" is said. In addition, full names must be listed and titles may be used. Rebuttal statements are due one week after the initial pro and con statements have been published so they are true rebuttals.

This year we have a star-studded cast signing onto ballot arguments, including the mayor, vice mayor, council members, former mayor, county supervisor, the Libertarian Party and San Jose residents.

Do you read ballot arguments, pro and/or con?
Do they influence your thought process about how you may vote?
Do you pay attention to who has signed ballot statements?
Do you like the addition of rebuttal statements?

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